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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

201st RSAC-C Forces Rotate Out, New Marine Team Arrives 2

201st Corps' QRF Deploys To Northern Afghanistan 3

Featured Patriot: Marine Corporal Matthew Askren 4

Pol-e-Charki Garrsion Opens Remodeled Pool And Soccer Field, Plants Trees 5

1st Brigade Continues The Fight In The 201st Eastern Zones 6

The Month In Pictures 7-8

Logar Province Opens New Joint Provincial Coordination Center For Afghan National Police

By MAJ Mark Biddwell
Logar Police Advisory Team

LOGAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan - On June 13th the Logar Provincial Police Headquarters played host to the opening of their new and updated Joint Provincial Coordination Center (JPCC).

The JPCC is a designated operations center that enables security forces to synchronize, coordinate and monitor provincial security and Afghan National Security Forces' joint operations. Additionally, it provides the communications link to the Joint Regional Coordination Center (JRCC). Logar is now fortunate enough to have both its JPCC and Provincial Police Headquarters collocated in the newly opened Provincial Police compound a few miles south of the village of Pol-e-Alam.

The event was attended by Major General Adbul-Alim Khohistani, the Central Regional zone commander and Major General Ghulam Mustafa Mohsini, Logar's Provincial Police Chief along with members of their respective staffs. Also in attendance was Colonel Kim Hooper, the RPAT-C (Regional Police Advisory Team - Central) Commander. The RPAT works closely with Dyncorp, a contracting firm also advising the police. Together the two participated in JPCC operations by providing advising teams to assist the Provincial staffs in developing operational, administrative and logistical systems. These systems and processes ensure the effective performance of this and other critical law enforcement functions.

Members Of The Afghan National Police Stand In Formation Outside Of The Police Headquarters In Kabul

In addition to their law enforcement responsibilities the Logar police have played a key role in Humanitarian Assistance (HA) operations throughout the province. During the last seven months the police have been involved in over 60 HA missions. These operations have included community medical clinics staffed by police medical personnel, delivering school supplies to rural areas, and participating in the construction and repair of community infrastructure.

But community based projects are only a part of the Logar police force duties. Logar continues to combat Anti-governmental elements and criminals that are attempting to gain a foothold in the rural areas of the province. The JPCC will provide the Provincial Police with an important instrument to manage and orchestrate their activities in conjunction with the Afghan National Army and Coalition Forces. Collectively these three elements are resolute in their commitment to quash the activities of any faction set on denying the citizens of the province the freedoms and peace they have so long awaited and so fiercely fought to obtain.

201st RSAC-C Marines And Airmen Rotate Out, New Marine Team Arrives

By LTJG Drew Gonterwitz
201st Corps PAO

CAMP BLACKHORSE, Afghanistan - After seven months many of the Marines and Airmen who have been leading the 201st Regional Security and Advising Command - Central, are heading home.

Members of the team were spread throughout the 201st Corps from the RSAC-C staff to the Afghan Border Police. Most of the 201st RSAC-C staff located at Camp Blackhorse were Marines deployed from 12th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division out of Okinawa Japan.

Marine Major Robert Sawyer, the 201st RSAC-C Operations Officer, remembers a sharp learning curve when they first arrived in November of last year. “We spent a lot of time at first just trying to find out who does what throughout the country,” Remembered Sawyer. “What agencies are responsible for what, and how that would affect our team.”

When his Marine team, led by former 201st Commanding Officer Colonel Gerald Smith began their deployment they got delayed starting in Japan. Flight problems caused many delays along the way and by the time they arrived in Afghanistan they only had about a four day turnover with the last Marine team. “At first we traveled around to different bases to get familier with them and our AO (area of operations).” Said Sawyer. “That helped us learn that simple things like just driving around can be complicated here.”

Over the past seven months the team has been involved in many decisive operations throughout the 201st Corps. Their first major operation was named Centaur Oqab, a joint mission with other coalition troops, led by the French. The operation took place in the Musahi Valley, providing security for reconstruction. “The goal was to provide a safe environment so reconstruction efforts could take place,” said Sawyer. “Our guys sealed off the possible escape routes in the valley, basically setting up blocking positions to capture the enemy as they tried to flee or enter the area.”

The Outgoing Marine Team In Front Of The Sarowbi Dive Shop On Their Final Convoy Through The 201st RSAC-C AO

In the eastern zone of the 201st Corps’ AO Operation Mountain Eagle Phase II took place. Historically the Taliban have retreated from these areas with very high elevations during the winter months. The problem for the Afghan population was that the Afghan National Army (ANA) would also leave during the winter. A large part of Operation Mountain Eagle II was winterization of the ANA bases in those areas. “It was important to provide the facilities for the ANA to be capable of staying in those remote areas throughout the winter months,” said Sawyer. “It showed the population that the ANA was there to stay. That they could clear snow from passes allowing access to larger villages during the winter, providing much needed fire wood and really improving the quality of life for those citizens.”

Another important aspect of Mountain Eagle II was building up bases to allow the ANA forces to be there when spring rolled around. For months during the winter the Taliban stated they were preparing to launch a ‘Spring Offensive.’ Having the ANA already stationed in the eastern areas helped stave off the rumored terrorist campaign. “The Taliban’s so called Spring Offensive didn’t materialize like they had hoped,” said Sawyer. “This is due in part because we had troops out there all year long.”

Back at Camp Blackhorse the RSAC-C Staff advised their ANA counterparts, helping to build a better organizational structure for their Army. Building a plans cell was a new, big step forward. “We always stressed to the ANA the importance of mission planning,” said Sawyer. “Now they have an organized plans cell so they can better prepare for large movements they know are ahead. Planning ahead was something they didn’t do before.”

Another accomplishment Major Sawyer points out is the implementation of a non-lethal Effects Board. The purpose is to plan more effective humanitarian aid visits and reconstruction or CERP projects to influence and win over the population. “Just going out and shooting the bad guys won’t win this,” said Sawyer. “Right now the Afghan people love their Army.

continued on page five...

201st Corps' Quick Reaction Force Deployed

An Afghan Policeman Receives Help After Being Injured In The Riot

"It was a long hard trip. But as the QRF Brigade we'll be ready to go again if something happens."
-Major Dallen Christiansen

By LTJG Drew Gonterwitz
201st Corps PAO

CAMP BLACKHORSE, Afghanistan - Troops from 3rd Brigade, 4th and 5th Kandaks (Battalions) of the 201st Corps received a surprise order at ten p.m. on May 28th; be ready to leave at six a.m. the next morning on a 15 hour drive north.

Three years ago a local warlord named Dolstrum had worked with Coalition Forces to kick out the Taliban in the area. Recently a Governor was appointed and corruption followed. This caused unrest in the area. The local population, led by Dolstrum, began rioting.

The Afghan Ministry of Defense ordered the QRF (Quick Reaction Force) from the 201st to supplement forces in the 209th Corps, which is headquartered in the northern city of Mazhar-e-Sharif. MOD needed 200 Afghan troops to make the trip. Major Dallen Christiansen and Master Sergeant Wade Francis were two of the Embedded Trainers assigned to the QRF who made the trip.

They arrived at the town of Sheberghan at around 9 p.m. Settling in for the night they prepared to do a reconnaissance mission the next morning. "The city was peaceful, but all of the shops were still closed," said Major Christiansen. "There were still some people demonstrating, but in small groups of maybe five to ten. The population was very happy to see us and the Afghan troops. The local citizens were worried about an armed coup."

While the local population was unhappy about the newly appointed Governor, they did not want the former warlord, Dolstrum, to take over either. The Afghan citizens' joy at seeing the ANA arrive to prevent this, and their desire to have government forces remain in power shows the growing confidence the ANA have from the population.

The major demonstration had preceded their arrival. Swedish troops in the area had been present during the riots which had killed Afghan civilians. A funeral was planned for the next day, and many in the area were worried of more riots and demonstrations. Nothing materialized. For the next ten days Major Christiansen and his men stayed at the Mazhar-e-Sharif base conducting riot control training for the future.

The extremely long convoy up to Mazhar-e-Sharif was eventful in itself. "We had to stop along the way to fuel up," said Major Christiansen. "We didn't have enough fuel on us so we just pulled up to a local station and bought gas from the locals." The 15 hour convoy took them through passes over 10,000 ft. "We drove through some beautiful moutains and scenery," remembered Master Sergeant Francis. "The Salalang Pass was well over 10,000 ft."

Driving 12,000 pound armored humvees 15 hours up and over mountains can be problematic. "One of our humvees actually caught on fire going up there," said Francis. "The brakes coming down the back side of a mountain were so hot they caught fire." After using a fire extinguisher to put it out they decided to connect a tow rope from the humvee to an Afghan seven-ton transport truck. Allowing the larger transport truck to tow their vehicles up the large mountains at least helped to prevent the engines from over heating, another problem.

201st Corps Troops rarely conduct operations in other Corps. The 201st Corps' 3rd Brigade is tasked to provide Afghanistan's QRF, which means their troops can be called at any time to help out in other areas. "It was a long hard trip. But as the QRF Brigade we'll be ready to go again if something happens." said Major Christiansen.

Afghan Civilians Protesting In The Northern Town Of Sheberghan (photos provide by Swedish Forces)

Featured Patriot: Marine Corporal Matthew Askren

Corporal Matthew Askren (left) Drinks Chai With Fellow Marine, Staff Sergeant Paul Klug

"That IED went off on the same route we were on less than an hour after we had been in that same location. We were really lucky that day."

-Corporal Matthew Askren

By LTJG Drew Gonterwitz
201st Corps PAO

CAMP BLACKHORSE, Afghanistan – Twenty year old Corporal Matthew Askren has been in Afghanistan just over 200 days, and has run 200 plus convoys. The Chicago Native is a convoy operations NCO for the 201st Corps RSAC-C at Camp Blackhorse.

That role has taken him all over the 201st Corps AO, escorting two U.S. Commanders, Colonels Gerald Smith and Phil Smith, and the Afghan National Army's former Commander, Major General Mangal. "I had the privilege of advising the 201st Corps ANA Commander's PSD (personnel security detachment) while I was here," said Askren. "They really took care of us when we first got here. They had to take the lead and show us around since we were new. To be a two star's PSD those guys had to be pretty motivated and trustworthy. I enjoyed working with them."

Corporal Askren's MOS is Armorer, which includes fixing the 201st Corps' small arms when they need repair. He is also in charge of Camp Blackhorse's base contingency ammunition. "If the base gets overrun, the ammo I control is what we would use," said Askren. "Normally I'm driving during our convoys, but being an armorer I have as much knowledge as anyone if I need to jump up in the turret."

With 200 plus convoys under his belt Corporal Askren has been lucky to never have hit an IED. On December 27th of last year he was on a routine convoy through Kabul. Like always they had their electronic warfare device, the Duke, running. "When we got back our Electronic Warfare Officer told us that our Duke had been blocking the same frequency that was used to detonate an IED." Said Askren. "That IED went off on the same route we were on less than an hour after we had been in that same location." Unfortunately the IED hit an ISAF convoy causing causalities. "We were really lucky that day." Remembered Askren.

Part of 12th Marines, 3rd Marine Division, Corporal Askren will be returning to Okinawa, Japan in a couple weeks after his 7 month deployment here in Afghanistan. "We're getting back the weekend of the 4th of July. A lot of my buddies are still on the Island, so we'll definitely have some time off and have a good time when we all get back," said Askren.

Gunnery Sergeant Mcquillan, Corporal Askren, And Staff Sergeant Klug During Corporal Askren's Re-Enlistment Ceremony

Pol-e-Charki Garrison Opens Remodeled Pool

The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony At The Stone Entrance To The Remodeled Pool

By LTJG Drew Gonterwitz
201st Corps PAO

POL-E-CHARKI, Afghanistan - On a hot June Afghan day members of the Afghan National Army Pol-e-Charki Garrison staff, guests, and U.S. Miltary advisors gathered on a hill high above the rest of the base. The occasion was the opening of the base pool, a long forgotten base asset. “When I first saw this six months ago it was in bad shape,” remembered LTJG Kent Su, an ANA Garrison advisor.

On June 21st the turquoise tile and crystal clear water glistened under the summer sun. The ANA 201st Corps Garrison Commander, Colonel Hashimi was pleased with the base improvement. “I am very happy today, we are opening the first pool for our soldiers,” said Hashimi. “This is a wonderful morale asset our soldiers can use after training to relax and rest their legs.”

The contractor, Abdul Mateen of BKBMC Construction Company, said the cost of the pool and the new grass on the soccer field was about nine million Afghani, or roughly $180,000 dollars. “The pool was in very bad shape,” said Mateen. “It was leaking badly, that was the main problem.” One of the major aspects of the projects was finding a water source for them. “We had to drill two wells for the projects. One for the pool and soccer field and one for the new trees around the base.” said Mateen.

These improvements are only the beginning according to the Garrison Commander, Colonel Hashimi. His goal is to remodel the base sports stadium in the future, which surrounds the soccer field.

Guests Listen To ANA Colonel Hashimi Speak During The Dedication Of The Refurbished Pool

201st RSAC-C Marines/Airmen Rotate, Cont’d

cont’d from page two...

“The ANA leadership realizes that everytime they help the Afghan people they indirectly hurt the Taliban.” The plan is to eventually turn the Effects Board over to the ANA so they can organize and lead humanitarian and reconstruction projects themselves.

In February a major shift occurred in the focus of the 201st RSAC-C. An order came down from Major General Durbin, head of the U.S. training and advising forces in Afghanistan. The order was to shift the focus from the ANA to ANP, or Afghan National Police. “From an Operations Officer standpoint picking up the ANP mission was the biggest challenge over here,” said Sawyer. “We were given no new forces to help train them, and no new equipment.”

With Afghan Police everywhere this was a major task for the 201st RSAC-C. There are over 100 police districts in the 201st, and each one has a district police station. “The police are key to a secure and stable Afghanistan,” says Sawyer. “The reason the order came down to focus on advising the ANP was because the ANA was doing police work and therefore couldn’t simply focus on being an effective Army.” Major Sawyer says the ANP are probably where the ANA was three years ago. But with major success advising the ANA the decision was made to take a small risk with the Army in order to gain a major reward with the police.

The 201st RSAC-C Staff is in the process of a turnover with the incoming team. The new Marine team sent over a small advance team to help smooth the transition. Colonel Gerald Smith, who led the team before having to be redeployed back to Okinawa due to a medical issue, even helped out. “Since Colonel Smith had an intimate knowledge of the situation from his time here, he was able to work with the new Marines during their pre-deployment training in Okinawa,” said Sawyer.

The deployment went fast enough, says Major Sawyer, because everyone stayed really busy. It wasn’t exactly a quiet deployment either. “I’d say over half of the 201st RSAC-C Staff have been in some kind of scrap with the enemy. Whether it was getting shot at or with Rocket Propelled Grenades. Our Data Marine, Corporal Gardner, was shot at,” said Sawyer.

1st Brigade Continues The Fight In Eastern Zones

During A Recent Visit With Troops, 3rd Kandak Team Chief, LTC Rob Smullen (left), Congratulates An ANA Soldier For His Bravery In Battle During An Attack On Kamu

By LTC George M. Schwartz
1st Bde, 201st Corps Senior Advisor

DARULAMAN, Afghanistan - The Eastern Zone of the 201st Corps' Area of Operations (EZAO) encompasses the four eastern-most provinces of RSAC-Central: Nuristan in the north, Kunar along the Pakistan border, Nangahar in the south, and Laghman which borders the other three. This has been a highly contested area where several historical events of Operation Enduring Freedom have occurred. The last known location of Osama bin Laden was actually at the ANA compound in Jalalabad, and the Battle of Tora Bora was fought in southern part of Nangahar along the Pakistan border.

The 1st Brigade, commanded by MG Qadam Shah, is currently conducting counterinsurgency operations alongside coalition forces in the EZAO. The 2nd and 3rd Kandaks (Battalions) operate out of eight outposts in Kunar Province and five in distant Nuristan—the latter are really only accessible by air. Fourth Kandak has two FOBs in Laghman Province, one in western Nangahar, and has two cannon crews in Kunar province. The 5th (Combat Service Support) has its Forward Logistics Element based at Asadabad to better support the 2nd and 3rd Kandaks; a "slice" of the 5th Kandak also supports the brigade from the Jalalabad compound. A reserve unit from the brigade is also based there.

The 1st Brigade works in close cooperation with the Coalition Force unit in the same area of operations, and in most cases, the same outposts. Taskforce Spartan from the US 10th Mountain Division transferred authority on June 6th to the 173rd Airborne Brigade, known as Taskforce Bayonet. Taskforce Bayonet has a storied history from the Vietnam War and last served in Afghanistan two years ago. Colonel Charles Preysler, the TF Bayonet commander, has already had several meetings with MG Shah and his staff.

While 1st Brigade ANA forces have suffered some casualties from combat, along with the Coalition Forces (CF), they are giving it back to the Anti-Coalition Militia (ACM) better than what they have received. On the same day as the CF Transfer of Authority, the 173rd Airborne and 3rd Kandak units in Kamu bested an ACM attack on their outpost. The rare daytime fight caused many ACM casualties, and has effectively quieted down their operations in the area. One RPG Gunner from 3rd Kandak, is even credited with two kills using the CF Platoon Leader's M4 rifle when the lieutenant laid it down to call in close air support.

The 1st Brigade, garrisoned at Camp Darulaman, is now conducting counterinsurgency operations in seven provinces as its 1st Kandak continues operations in Kapisa, Logar and Maydan Wardak provinces.

LTC George Schwartz (Left), 1st BDE Senior Advisor, Discusses The Situation At Gowerdesh With LTC Chirs Kolenda, Task Force Saber Commander

Pol-e-Charki
Press

201st Corps
Camp Blackhorse

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The Pol-e-Charki Press is the newsletter for the 201st Regional Security Advisory Command - Central (RSAC-C) in Afghanistan. This is the first edition of a newsletter for the 201st. It is meant to be an informative publication both for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airman, and Marines in Afghanistan and for friends and family members back home. The newsletter staff will do its best to bring relevant and informative news to its readers on a monthly basis.

The Pol-e-Charki Press Is On The Web
www.taskforcephoenix.com/201arch.htm

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The Month In Pictures

The View From The Gunner's Turret Atop An Armored Humvee During A Convoy (photo submitted by MSG Francis)

Major Dallen Christiansen Meets With Local Afghans In the Northern Afghan City Of Sheberghan (photo submitted by MSG Francis)

Members Of The 201st RSAC-C Staff At The Summit Of Ghar Mountain Just West Of Camp Blackhorse

An Afghan Man Rides A Donkey Cart Through The Streets Of Sheberghan In Northern Afghanistan (photo submitted by MSG Francis)

Captain Antonio Salazar, Major Sean Tyler, And Captain Dave Dufresne At The Transfer Of Authority BBQ June 25th On Camp Blackhorse

201st RSAC-C Commander, Colonel Phil Smith, Thanks The Outgoing Marine and Air Force Team During A Colors Ceremony June 25th On Camp Blackhorse